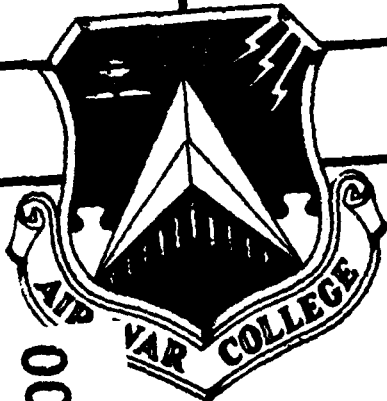


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RESEARCH REPORT

COMBAT LEADERSHIP: DOES IT REQUIRE DIFFERENT TRAITS AND
SKILLS THAN MANAGERIAL OR PEACETIME LEADERSHIP?

LIEUTENANT COLONEL ROBERT MABUS

1989

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AIR UNIVERSITY
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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COMBAT LEADERSHIP: DOES IT REQUIRE DIFFERENT
TRAITS AND SKILLS THAN MANAGERIAL OR PEACETIME
LEADERSHIP?

by

Robert Mabus
Lieutenant Colonel, USAF

A DEFENSE ANALYTICAL STUDY SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
IN
FULFILLMENT OF THE CURRICULUM
REQUIREMENT

Advisor: Colonel Bryan D. Strickland

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TITLE: Combat Leadership: Does it Require Different Traits and Skills Than Managerial or Peacetime Leadership?

AUTHOR: Robert Mabus, Lieutenant Colonel, USAF

→ Remarks on the problem of studying leadership and the lack of emphasis on combat leadership in curricula of today's military schools is followed by an explanation of the analysis used in the paper. A list of leadership traits essential for military leaders is given including a brief explanation of each one. Five famous senior combat leaders of the past are examined closely to see if they exhibited the traits listed as well as what they may have regarded as the necessary skills and traits for successful leadership. The conflict between managers and heroic leaders is discussed and how each concept fits with the military's need for combat leaders. The importance of the leadership traits identified with the five combat leaders for future military leaders is discussed. Some ways to develop these traits in young officers and future leaders are suggested. (CR)

↑

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lieutenant Colonel Robert Mabus (M.S.M., Troy State University) has, over several years, become concerned about the direction the study of leadership in the military has taken since Vietnam. His interest in this area intensified while serving as commander of an A-10 fighter squadron from 1986 to 1988. In two assignments in the F-4, he served as a instructor pilot and flight commander. He has had a close association with the US Army with a tour as a Brigade Air Liaison Officer and attendance at the Army Command and General Staff College. This association continued with two assignments in the A-10. He has served extensively in Europe along side our Nato allies. His tours in Europe cover nine years and include an F-4 tour, staff officer at Allied Air Forces Central Europe headquarters and A-10 Squadron Commander RAF Bentwaters, UK. These experiences gave him the opportunity to observe leadership in a sister service as well as many allied military organizations. Lieutenant Colonel Mabus is a graduate of the Air War College, class of 1989.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Probably the most difficult subject for study by military schools is leadership. Every level of professional military education in the Air Force has a leadership course, usually early in the curriculum, so it's easy to see how important this subject has become to the military. However, the part of leadership that is most difficult to deal with is combat leadership. The lack of study in this area was recognized after Vietnam and additional emphasis was placed on combat, though most curricula devote only a small amount of time to this part of leadership. The 1988/89 Air War College curriculum is a perfect example, with only four hours out of a leadership course comprising 32.5 hours, devoted to combat leadership.¹

Most studies of leadership tend to emphasize managerial traits. This focus on management has occurred for probably two reasons. First of all, efforts to identify the particular psychological traits and characteristics of potential military leaders have not been very successful. This problem of identifying traits is especially true for combat leaders. Military leadership is strongly influenced by the tasks to be performed and the goals being pursued. Though combat is the military's business, very few military officers today have led in combat.

The second reason managerial traits are stressed deals with the increasing technological emphasis in today's military. The growth of the military manager and military technologist (engineer) tends to civilianize the military-- i.e., to make them and their leaders more like civilian organizations and civilian managers. In fact, immediately following the Vietnam War, the military began to focus more and more on management skills, equating these to leadership skills. But the military has the special mission of combat, which requires maintaining the distinctive quality required of an armed force. Combat leaders are vital and the military must have them.²

Analysis

This paper will examine the qualities of selected combat leaders in order to isolate those traits vital for effective combat leadership. This study examines those generally accepted leadership traits most studies of leadership emphasize. Then the leadership attributes displayed by five great combat leaders of WWII and beyond, as well as what these leaders themselves saw as the necessary leadership skills for effective combat leadership, are examined.

With this approach, the paper attempts to determine what combat leadership skills/traits are needed that may not be as important for peacetime leadership. If leadership traits are the same, then what is different about effective

combat leaders? Chapter II discusses the traits most often considered essential for effective leaders while chapter III examines five great combat leaders from the past. Chapter IV compares management and combat leader characteristics. Chapter V discusses some conclusions and suggest a few changes for the future study of leadership in the military.

CHAPTER II

LEADERSHIP TRAITS

What is found in most books on leadership as well as what is found in the Air War College curriculum tends to follow what can be termed managerial traits. It is true that many traits of leaders will be the same, and because of the technical nature of many military jobs, especially in the Air Force, it is easy to see why managerial skills are stressed. This paper's focus is on leadership traits, and, using sources recommended by military schools, it will discuss those traits most often cited as prerequisites for effective leaders:

Integrity (Personal and Professional)

The one trait consistently cited in any study of leadership is integrity. Integrity may be the most important leadership trait and probably the one which creates the greatest problem for most of today's military officers. Integrity is not only necessary for leaders, it is a prerequisite to being a true military professional. A leader must insist on integrity in his subordinates, but more importantly, he must personally display a high level of integrity. This trait is one that is an absolute necessity for a leader, regardless of his position--military or civilian; peacetime or combat.

Integrity presents the greatest problem for military officers. Many officers are truly concerned about integrity when it comes to reporting. The Army War College's study on military professionalism (1970) supports this perception. Many officers interviewed expressed concern that the system forces unethical reporting and practices. Typical of remarks from questionnaires used in the study were these: "The system forces unethical reporting and practices and punishes variation"; and "I am concerned with honesty, trust, and administrative competence within the officer corps....commander influence impairs calling a spade a spade." ¹

This report in 1970 reflects not only what officers of that era believed. As a fighter squadron commander in 1986, I found the same skepticism in my young officers when it came to integrity issues. They saw the integrity issue as one that is integrally related to the problem of placing career before honor.

Selflessness

Closely allied with integrity is the concern about self-interest, rather than commitment to one's profession. The purpose of the military is to provide for the defense and security of the nation. Military service, therefore, requires altruistic men because of the magnitude of power and responsibility that has been entrusted to them. In a

1985 Army War College study on military professionalism, 68 percent of the officers surveyed agreed that the officer corps was preoccupied with personal gain, rather than selflessness. For these individuals, promoting self-interest is given greater importance than the good of the unit, the service and society.²

Competence

To be an effective leader requires knowledge of your profession. Subordinates follow men whom they trust to know how to get the job done. You don't have to be an expert about everything under your control, but you had better know enough to know when things are going wrong. When it comes to combat skills, you must be very good because followers place their lives in the hands of combat leaders. Expertise by a leader breeds confidence in the leader by his subordinates. As stated in the article "Leadership" by Air Vice Marshall J.R. Walker, "The modern fighting man will not willingly follow a fool--nor should the system require him to do so."³

A Winner

A good combat leader must be a winner. If he has been a graceful loser in the past, he will continue to be a loser. He must know what the thrill of victory is, whether that has been in a flying weapons competition or some tactical ground problem. Everyone wants to follow a winner

in combat. One of the most famous winners was General Patton in WWII. Though he was not always in the favor of his superiors, they could not afford to sack him, because he was a winner.

Physical and Moral Courage

Physical courage is easily understood by most military personnel. To accept the dangers of combat yet remain calm and make appropriate decisions is absolutely essential for any combat leader. Accepting the dangers of combat doesn't mean a leader in combat will not experience fear, but the good overcome their fear and continue to function and carry out their duty in a way that makes their men overcome their own fear.⁴

Moral courage is a much more difficult problem and is one that is required in combat and peacetime. This characteristic is also closely tied to integrity. What does a military leader do when he knows his superior has made a bad decision or issued an order that is morally wrong? A good example might be changing data in reports to higher headquarters in order to show better statistics than actually exist. Understanding the danger it poses to his career, a morally courageous leader must voice objections and challenge his superior. Failure to be morally courageous in peacetime may not create a serious situation, but in combat it could mean the loss of many lives. In peacetime, it could mean the loss of respect.

Loyalty

A good leader not only expects loyalty from his subordinates, but must demonstrate his own loyalty to them and to his superiors. This idea of loyalty can come into conflict with moral courage, if required to support a leader in a decision that is not appropriate. Equally important with loyalty between the leader, superior and subordinate is the concept of loyalty to self, to moral, ethical and professional ideals, undergirded with the courage to defend a position to all proper limits.⁵

This list of leadership traits is only one of many and reflects what most writers and military leaders consider to be the most important ones. Any study of leadership will probably have more or less, but these tend to be discussed most often. Now that the important traits required for a leader have been identified, this study will examine some of the military's greatest combat leaders from WWII through Vietnam. This period was selected because the military structure and type of combat found in these conflicts are very similar to what we would expect in any conflict in the foreseeable future.

CHAPTER III

COMBAT LEADERS

General George S. Patton

General George S. Patton was probably the best known and most controversial of our combat leaders in WWII. Throughout his career, he demonstrated all the leadership traits listed previously. General Patton's knowledge of warfare was unsurpassed. He was an ardent student of military history; however, he warned against the biases often encountered in historical writings. General Patton was not a scholarly person; in fact he took five years to graduate from West Point. But because of his intense interest in military history, there was no commander more knowledgeable in tactics.¹

Patton frequently displayed physical courage. He had little use for leaders that refrained from going to the battle front. As he himself said:

"What good is a general who won't take the same risks as his troops? I am sure that if every leader who goes into battle will promise himself that he will come out a conqueror or a corpse, he is sure to win."²

General Patton's approach to physical courage went hand in hand with his belief that the commander must be a visible, living presence.

Patton felt just as strongly about moral courage as he did about physical courage. He said moral courage fosters the resolution for combat and cherishes the ability to assume responsibility, whether it be for successes or for failures.³ He frequently fought orders from higher headquarters that he considered wrong. He considered it his moral duty. Yet when told to carry them out anyway, he always remained loyal to his superior. General Patton was an intensely loyal commander, especially to his troops but also to his superiors, even when he did not particularly admire or agree with them. As he himself said, "A man who is truly and unselfishly loyal to his superiors is of necessity so to his juniors, and they to him."⁴

Having looked at the leadership traits displayed by Patton, one must look at what the man himself considered the most important traits for leaders:

1. Self-confidence of the right sort, as differentiated from presumptuous presumption based on ignorance, is the result of proven ability, the sense of conscious achievement. Its existence presupposes enthusiasm, for without this quality, no one could endure the travail of acquiring self-confidence. The enthusiasm which permits the toil and promises the achievement is simply an all-absorbing preoccupation in the profession elected.

2. Endurance is linked with self-confidence. Mentally, it is the ability to subvert the means to the end, to hitch the wagon to a star and to attain it. Physically, it presupposes sufficient enthusiasm to force on nature, no matter how reluctant, the obligation of constant bodily fitness through exercise. The expanding waist line means the contracting heart line, both in length and vigor.

3. Abnegation of self seems perhaps incongruous when applied to such selfish persons as a Frederick or a Napoleon, but this is not the case. Self can be

subordinated to self.

4. Loyalty is frequently only considered as faithfulness from the bottom up. It has another and equally important application; that is from the top down.

5. Courage, moral and physical, is almost synonymous with all the foregoing traits. No commander ever showed more of it than did Lee after Gettysburg.⁵

Finally, General Patton states that: "these traits are of no military value if concealed. A man of diffident manner will never inspire confidence. There must be an outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace. It then appears that the leader must be an actor and such is the fact. However, it is unconvincing unless the leader lives his part."⁶

General Matthew B. Ridgway

General Ridgway, for all his glamour as a tough, demanding paratroop commander, was a very humane officer. The lives of soldiers were never a necessary abstraction to him. They were valued comrades, individuals who mattered much in the balance of things.⁷

To a large extent, Ridgway's pronounced sense of professional and personal integrity was based upon his fundamental commitment to the well-being of the individual soldiers whose lives were not to be wasted. In his memoirs he wrote:

To my way of thinking, no great battle commander has ever reached the heights he might have reached if he did not feel the love for his men, and a profound respect for them, and for the jobs they had to do. In my opinion the commander, who in the confusion and the excitement of battle forgets that he is dealing with men's lives, and who through callousness or stupidity sacrifices them needlessly, is more butcher than battle leader.⁸

This concern for the soldier is closely interwoven into all of General Ridgway's leadership philosophy and supports the trait of selflessness. It can be seen in his concern about orders or plans from higher authority that needlessly endangered the combat soldier. He felt that every leader's moral integrity required him to fight such orders or plans. A perfect example of General Ridgway's concern for this is his approach to a plan to drop his 82nd Division near Rome, Italy, in WWII. He was convinced the plan could not succeed and would result in thousands of needless casualties. He argued with higher headquarters, and when rebuffed, continued to plead his case even though he knew it jeopardized his career. He finally convinced his superiors to send two volunteers behind enemy lines to check out the situation in Rome. Their report pointed out many problems with the promised Italian support, and as a result the plan was canceled. Later evidence proved that Ridgway's concern was valid, and the plan would have been a major catastrophe if it had been executed.⁹

Another key leadership trait expressed by General Ridgway is physical courage. For him, being willing to share the same dangers as his soldiers was a prerequisite for a good combat leader. He also felt there was a requirement for a leader to go to the front so he could see for himself what was happening, then being available to assist the commander on the spot. During WWII, as a corp

commander, General Ridgway dismissed commanders on two occasions because they failed to exhibit this trait at a critical time in the battle.¹⁰

As an American military leader, General Ridgway exhibited very high levels of moral courage. His strong sense of integrity and moral courage created problems for him while serving as the Army Chief of Staff under President Eisenhower. General Ridgway disagreed with budget cuts in the Army's portion of defense spending. It was suggested by Secretary of Defense Wilson that he reduce the strength of combat divisions in order to keep the same number of units overseas with the reduced funding. General Ridgway refused to take the Secretary's suggestion, even when Mr. Wilson indicated the suggestion came directly from the President. He told Mr. Wilson that,

...if my deep convictions led me to take an opposite view, I would adhere to that judgement until purely military arguments proved me wrong. I would not be swayed by arguments that what I advocated would be politically unacceptable, or that its cost was greater than the administration felt we could afford.¹¹

General Ridgway's deep commitment to integrity and to the individual soldier made him one of our greatest combat leaders in WWII and Korea.

The first two combat leaders discussed were Army commanders. They frequently were out front leading their troops into combat, displaying exceptional physical courage. How do Air Force combat leaders compare to ground commanders? What characteristics do they exhibit?

General Curtis E. LeMay

The first Air Force combat leader to be studied is General Lemay. He has been described as a hard driving, single purpose individual. But the one thing that almost every writer agrees on is that General Lemay was the most popular and famous Air Force general since the Air Force became a separate service. What made this man such a dynamic combat leader and architect of Strategic Air Command?

The previous statement that General Lemay was a hard driving, single purpose leader is at the core of what made him great. In his early days as a commander, he drove his unit to achieve combat readiness. He had one purpose; to make his outfit a top-notch bomber unit before they had to enter combat in Europe in WWII.¹²

To ensure his unit was combat ready, General Lemay took drastic measures. As he put it, "temporary expediency" was the order of the day. He severely restricted his personnel's time-off and even went so far as to restrict the married men to the base because he wanted nothing to interfere with their training.¹³ This total dedication to the job and mission was typical of Lemay's entire career and is what made him so successful.

General Lemay was probably America's most knowledgeable bomber commander in WWII. He became an expert in every facet of bomber operations. When he was commander

of the 305th bomber squadron, he was seen on several occasions in his coveralls, with tools in his hands, showing a crewchief how to solve a problem. Because of his navigation skills, he was selected to help establish air routes to Europe and North Africa in WWII.

This in-depth knowledge Lemay had, and his constant study of bomber tactics, made him a great innovator. On arrival in Europe, he quickly determined that the bomber formations being flown by the B-17s did not provide sufficient protection because they were so complicated few could fly them properly. He developed a new formation for his squadron, which eventually became the standard throughout Eighth Air Force.¹⁴

Another problem LeMay was very concerned about was the poor bombing results. He determined that there was no way to improve bombing accuracy using the current practice of jinking to defeat antiaircraft artillery fire on the final run to the target. Making his own calculations on the probability of a B-17 being hit by this fire, he determined that the aircraft could fly straight and level to the target with no greater risk of being hit than if it flew a zigzag course. LeMay instituted new procedures for his bombers that required them to make a straight and level bomb run. His unit became the most accurate bombers in Eighth AF, yet lost no more aircraft on missions than units that continued to zigzag.¹⁵

The problem of changing bomb runs to straight and level taught LeMay a very valuable lesson about leadership. When he made the decision to change to a straight-and-level bomb run, his pilots said it could not be done and did not want to change. LeMay said it could be done, and he would prove it by flying the lead plane on the first mission. His men made no further objection and LeMay decided then that if a commander is willing to do something himself, his men will go through hell to follow him.¹⁶ General LeMay, throughout his career, showed his people he was willing to suffer the same dangers and hardships they experienced. In Europe, he often led the most dangerous combat missions and frequently lived in the same spartan conditions as his junior officers.¹⁷

General Lemay displayed another characteristic required of a great leader-willingness to accept risk. As commander of the 20th Air Force in the Pacific, he ordered the first low level B-29 bomb raid against Japan, even though most of his staff advised against it. As the commander of United States Air Forces in Europe during the Berlin Crisis, he wanted to build up support areas in France and Belgium. At the time, the presence of American troops in these countries was illegal. LeMay, therefore, sent in logistics personnel in civilian clothes by a round-about route to avoid detection.¹⁸ If this had been discovered, it could have been the end of his career.

Loyalty was a trait General LeMay not only exhibited, but one he demanded of his subordinates. His loyalty to his profession and superiors is easily seen from his approach to assignments. He was never accused of looking only for those assignments that would promote his career. If that had been his approach, he would have done everything possible to avoid moving to command of the B-29 operations in the Pacific in WWII. He was probably the most successful bomber commander in Europe at the time and the B-29 was loaded with problems. Air Force Chief General Hap Arnold was very upset with the lack of success of the B-29 missions against Japan. When asked to go to the Pacific, General LeMay never questioned the decision, even though he preferred to stay in Europe. LeMay was just as loyal to subordinates. As commander of Strategic Air Command (SAC), he initiated a spot promotion program that allowed commanders to give a one-step promotion to an entire aircraft crew when they met certain rigorous inspection and performance standards.¹⁹ Additionally, during the period of SAC's greatest expansion, between 1952 and 1958, LeMay spent "sixty to seventy percent of his time trying to improve living conditions for the men, and trying to get family housing".²⁰

LeMay was a great motivator of people. As B-29 commander in the Pacific, he motivated people from the wing commanders down to put forth greater efforts in maintenance,

ordnance handling, and support and flying to generate the highest sortie rate the B-29s had ever accomplished.²¹ As commander of SAC, he showed this same ability to motivate people, when he transformed SAC into the best military command in the US during the 1950s.

The only problem General LeMay had as a leader was his difficulty in dealing with those outside the Air Force, especially with the Washington bureaucracy. Throughout his tenure as the Air Force Chief of Staff, he frequently found himself in trouble with the Secretary of Defense, the President and other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He was considered unbending and accused of having only one solution to any problem, "bombing". This made it difficult for him to accomplish very much. He lost the battle for the B-70 and the controversy over development of the TFX, which eventually became the F-111.²²

No leader displayed integrity more strongly than did General LeMay, which was one of the reasons he had so much trouble as Chief of Staff. He refused to compromise what he believed was the best course for the Air Force on any particular issue, even if it was opposed by the political masters. How he felt about the integrity of military officers can be demonstrated best by his remarks at his last staff meeting as Chief of Staff. He told those present,

...always push the Chief and the Vice Chief and they should never compromise their plans. Make sure you are right before you move and then stick with your guns and keep fighting for what you want. It takes a long time to

get things done but right prevails in the end in our form of government.²³

All in all, General LeMay will be remembered as a superb combat commander and molder of SAC. When a situation called for a hardnosed, stick-to-it personality, General LeMay was called to take the lead. He was a winner who never accepted anything less than total effort from himself and his people.

General George S. Brown

When it comes to a contemporary Air Force leader, there is none more famous than General George S. Brown. He went from a second lieutenant right out of West Point to full colonel in just over three years. His career was one that any young officer would like to emulate and certainly one that should be studied. His career spanned three wars and involved leadership positions in almost every type of command in the Air Force, culminating in Chief of Staff and then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. With this kind of success story, what qualities made him such a successful leader in every aspect of his military career, including combat?

General Brown began his career as a B-24 aircraft commander in Europe during WWII. Early in his combat experience he displayed professional dedication and physical courage. While acting as his group's deputy leader on the first mission against the Ploesti oil refinery, he had to

assume command after his group commander was shot down. The lead group of B-24s had turned early and alerted all the air defenses in the area. Rather than abandon the mission, Brown led his remaining aircraft to a successful attack of their assigned target in the face of some of the most intense antiaircraft fire any bombers had ever experienced.²⁴ Another testimony to his physical courage was his willingness to continue flying combat after he had completed the required 25 combat missions.²⁵

Another leadership trait Brown displayed in his early years and adhered to throughout his career was pursuit of job knowledge. As a B-24 pilot he learned every job on the crew, including gunner.²⁶ He tackled every job he was assigned in the same manner, reading extensively and pursuing in-depth knowledge. As Director of Operations for Fifth Air Force in Korea, Brown conducted a study to determine the best tactics and optimum altitude for the dive bomber and light bomber missions. He then revised the night-intruder and tactical-bomber programs, achieving better results with sharply decreased losses.²⁷

Probably the strongest leadership trait exhibited by General Brown was loyalty. No period in his career tested his loyalty like his tenure as military assistant to then Secretary of Defense McNamara. McNamara was not well liked by most military men and was often at odds with the military's position on various defense matters. As

assistant to the Secretary of Defense, General Brown often found himself supporting his boss on positions that were contrary to his own service chief's desire.

Brown was just as loyal to his subordinates. When he took command of Williams AFB, the flight line maintenance people had no place to get out of the heat during the day or the cold at night. He wanted the problem corrected and authorized the structure of several flight line buildings. To do it quickly meant bending some regulations, but he considered it necessary for his people's well being.²⁸

Along with his strong loyalty went moral courage. Both traits were severely tested during the furor over the B-70 bomber. Air Force Chief of Staff LeMay was a strong proponent of the B-70, but McNamara was not. General Brown agreed with McNamara and supported him fully in opposition to his own service chief.

As stated in chapter II, integrity is the most important trait a leader must possess. General Brown displayed the highest integrity throughout his career. Secretary of Defense McNamara said Brown's "greatest attribute was his absolute integrity".²⁹ He said Brown never compromised his integrity by pushing programs his service desired if he believed it was not appropriate. This is evident from his support for cancellation of the B-70, even though that went against his service.³⁰

A selfless leader, Brown had a deep commitment to serving his country. He did not let the desire for advancement interfere with what he considered his duty. As he said himself, "Some men are willing to die for their country but do not have the courage to sacrifice a slot in the promotion ladder."³¹ Many of Brown's friends felt he needed to leave his job with McNamara because it would hurt his chances for advancement. Most military chiefs disliked McNamara and Brown often found himself supporting McNamara, even though doing so was in opposition to what the military wanted. When asked why he stayed, General Brown stated, "I can do a lot more good by staying in here and working on the problem from the inside than I can by quitting."³²

General Brown showed the same willingness to risk his career in delegating authority and responsibility to subordinates. When he assumed the position of the Seventh Air Force commander in Vietnam, he immediately let his wing commanders know that he was not there to do their jobs and the same was true for his staff. He provided guidance and helped when required, but let his subordinates make decisions. This approach to command was completely opposite to the practice of his predecessor General Momyer, who was deeply involved in every aspect of air operations, including determining tactics for various aircraft.³³

General Brown was a totally dedicated military leader who rose to the top of his profession because of his

leadership abilities. He has been criticized by some for his support of civilian input to the conduct of the war in Southeast Asia, as well as the decision on forces to rescue the ship Mayaguez when it was captured by Cambodians in 1975. However, one thing no one has ever criticized was his total commitment to his profession.

The final combat leader to be studied is another WWII leader of Army Air Forces and an air power pioneer, General Ira E. Eaker. After his retirement, he continued to write and speak on leadership, visiting military schools in the 1950s and 60s to address this topic.

General Ira C. Eaker

As commander of the Eighth Air Force in England during WWII, General Eaker led the fledgling US air effort against Germany. He almost single handedly developed the U.S. bomber command that was the heart of Eighth Air Force. In doing this he was able to draw on a wide variety of experience leading up to WWII. In the twenty years following his graduation from flying school, he flew virtually every type of pursuit plane in the Army inventory.³⁴ He also participated in the 1926 goodwill tour of South America, where he experienced many unusual flight experiences. More importantly, the tour taught him a great deal about dealing with both military and civilian officials of different nationalities. Eaker teamed with Hap Arnold in

1936 to write the first of a series of books entitled This Flying Game, which was a "how to" book aimed at telling a broad public audience what military aviation was all about.³⁵ This type of technical and professional competence was typical throughout General Eaker's career.

All of the great combat leaders studied thus far displayed a great degree of physical courage, as well as a strong sense of moral courage. General Eaker is no exception. He began flying when every takeoff and landing was dangerous. On one leg of the South American goodwill flight, Eaker and his copilot, Lieutenant Muir S. Fairchild, decided it was important to keep the flight segment from Chile to Argentina on schedule, even though they did not have adequate charts and the weather was poor. As they crossed the Andes mountains, they developed engine trouble, which forced them to descend over what they expected to be the highest part of the mountains. Good luck and skill found them flying through a pass and over a lake, where they landed. They repaired the engine and then completed the leg.³⁶

In the thirties, Eaker showed great moral courage by advocating air power as coequal with land and sea forces. At a time when this position was strongly opposed by the hierarchies of the Army and Navy, he consistently and eloquently argued for an increased role for the airplane and the Army Air Corps. He showed the same courageous attitude

during WWII, as he fought to keep the U.S. bomber forces committed to daylight precision bombing in the face of opposition by high ranking British and US officials.

General Eaker was an intensely loyal commander to both subordinates and superiors. Unfortunately this strength was sometimes his weakness.³⁷ He selected a longtime friend, Colonel Longfellow, for command of VIII Bomber Command. He soon realized Longfellow was not a good bomber commander. But because of his strong loyalty to him, Eaker took much longer than he should have to relieve Longfellow. Eaker was compassionate as well as loyal to subordinates. As commander of the Mediterranean Army Air Forces, on one of his many trips back to England for a meeting, he had ample room on his aircraft, so he took three RAF enlisted men for a visit with their families.³⁸ General Eaker was just as loyal to his superiors. While Eighth Air Force commander, he was frequently criticized by the Air Chief of Staff, General Arnold, for not accomplishing more. General Eaker would patiently send letters and messages to Arnold explaining the lack of aircraft and trained crews, but he never vocally criticized his chief. He made every effort to carry forward in the manner Arnold wanted, even when his forces were lacking the necessary equipment and support.

No officer ever displayed greater integrity than General Eaker. His commitment to his profession was total.

Following WWII the Army Air Corp finally became a separate service, something that Eaker had been a strong and vocal supporter of since the 1930s. One of Eaker's last important actions in office was a lecture to the National War College on "The Army Air Force". In this lecture he expressed the view that no one arm of the armed forces wins a war, but a well balanced team of land, sea and air forces is required. He firmly believed this at a time when many were pushing the preeminence of the new Air Force.³⁹ He was advocating what he thought was the best defense establishment for the country.

Eaker was also a selfless leader. He retired in June 1947, even though it was common knowledge that he was General Spaatz's choice to succeed him as Air Force Chief of Staff. General Eaker firmly believed it was time for the "oldsters" to make room for the next generation.⁴⁰ This same selflessness was evident during Eaker's WWII duty in Europe. He built the Eighth Air Force up from infancy to a powerful force and then was asked to give it up on the threshold of its greatest period, the time leading up to the Normandy invasion. He moved to command of the Mediterranean Air Forces because General Arnold wanted him to.

General Eaker was asked many times what he considered the most important attributes for a great leader. In a speech to the Air University in 1961, he detailed what he considered the most important requisites for a leader.

The first requirement he specified was courage. The kind of courage he considered most important in the future was the courage of decision making. He felt the hardest decision facing future leaders would be the decision to launch nuclear weapons if the US were attacked . Next, he considered brains or intelligence as most important. He believed today's leader must be knowledgeable of his profession and versed in the social sciences--know how to influence and control the emotions and the minds of men. The next attribute or requisite is "to be lucky". "The new leader's big battle is his first battle. Win that, and it is certain he'll command at the next engagement". All great leaders must be physically and mentally fit. A stout spirit can drive a weak body a long way. Though he doesn't actually specify it as an attribute, General Eaker stated "a real leader must really want the job". There are no reluctant leaders. Finally, General Eaker said, "All successful leaders seem to have been articulate. They had a faculty for inspiring their followers with the spoken word. They could and did say the right thing at the right time".⁴¹

The study of General Eaker completes this analysis of five combat leaders. As clearly shown, these great leaders demonstrated all of the leadership traits listed in chapter II as being essential for a combat leader. These men all indicated that they owed much of their success to timing--the opportunity to command at the beginning of the

US involvement in WWII. Most great leaders agree that luck, being in the right place at the right time, has a lot to do with success as a leader. Luck may have played a part in success of the five leaders studied, but this study also shows that these men clearly possessed the leadership traits essential for a leader to be successful in combat and peacetime. What can be learned from these great military leaders and applied to development of future combat leaders?

CHAPTER IV

MANAGEMENT OR COMBAT LEADERSHIP

As stated in the introduction to this paper, today's military has a problem deciding what type of leader is needed. Are management traits the most important or should leaders emulate what is sometimes called the heroic leader? Is there a difference between managers and leaders? Military schools have tended to put the greatest emphasis on management traits, though this tendency has shifted some since the early 1970s. Heroic or combat leadership still receives the least attention, as demonstrated by the current AWC curriculum.

Theodore Levitt described the features of a managerial culture with its emphasis on rationality and control:

Management consist of the rational assessment of a situation and the systematic selection of goals and purposes (what is to be done); the systematic developement of strategies to achieve these goals; the marshalling of the required resources; the rational design, organization, direction, and control of the activities required to attain the selected purposes; and finally the motivating and rewarding of people to do the work.¹

In other words a manager is a problem solver. Leadership from a management perspective is a practical effort to direct affairs and get tasks accomplished. It takes neither genius nor heroism to be a manager, but rather persistence; tough-mindedness, hard work, intelligence, analytical

ability, and perhaps most important, tolerance and goodwill.² Abraham Zaleznik, in his article "Managers and Leaders: Are They Different," also states that managers tend to avoid risk. The instinct for survival dominates the need for taking risk.³

In contrast with the manager is the leader, often referred to as the heroic leader. This paper equates this type of leader to the combat leader since, as is evident from the five combat leaders studied, they are one and the same. A heroic leader is often a risk taker. The heroic leader embodies traditionalism and glory, along with martial spirit and personal valor.⁴ The heroic leader can be described as possessing the "fighter spirit", which has characterized traditional military leadership. This fighter spirit is not easily defined, but is based on a psychological motive, which drives a man to seek success in combat regardless of his personal safety.⁵ Morris Janowitz also refers repeatedly to the necessity for maintaining the "martial or fighting" spirit as a hallmark of the heroic leader. In contrast, he states that the military manager is primarily concerned with the technical and pragmatic dimensions of warfare, while the heroic leader provides "dramatic leadership to strategic and operational commands".⁶ These definitions of the heroic leader tend to be abstract, thus begging the question of what constitutes the martial or fighting spirit and dramatic leadership.

To overcome the problem of abstract terms, this paper attempts to build a concrete model for the combat or heroic leader. To do this, the author first identified six leadership traits attributed to combat leaders from various readings on leadership as well as the AWC curriculum. Specific incidents from the careers of five great combat leaders from WWII were presented. With the exception of General Patton, these leaders continued to function as leaders in their respective services after the end of the war. They continued to exhibit the same leadership traits in the peacetime military as they did in combat. In addition to the six traits identified, the study of the five leaders revealed some other prominent traits. These additional traits are: innovation, vision, compassion, and sense of mission. As important as these traits are, they are not unique to the heroic leader.

With the heroic leader traits identified and studied in some combat leaders' careers, what type of leaders are needed in the future military--managerial or heroic? The obvious answer is probably leaders that are a combination of both. From this study of the five combat leaders, it would seem that the traits most critical for leaders in any future conflict are those identified for combat leaders, and these traits are not necessarily found in managers.

Courage, the willingness to accept risk, be that to one's career or physical self, is what really separates the heroic leader from the manager. All five of the combat leaders studied displayed exceptional physical courage during WWII combat, but in addition they displayed a high degree of moral courage. General Patton was famous for his physical courage. He frequently went to the battlefield in WWII, sharing the same dangers as the men he commanded. General LeMay led some of the most dangerous bomber missions over Germany. In fact, he led the Regensburg package on the first Schweinfurt raid, which saw some of the heaviest bomber losses of WWII. General Ridgway jumped into France with his 82nd Airborne Division. Generals Eaker and Brown also displayed exceptional physical courage.

More importantly they all showed a high sense of moral courage. These leaders felt it their moral duty to question orders they considered less than prudent. General Ridgway risked his career to stop a planned airdrop of his division near Rome in WWII that he considered too risky, and was subsequently proven to be so. General Brown risked his career when he supported the unpopular Secretary of Defense McNamara in his fight to scrap the B-70 bomber, even though the Air Force leadership wanted the aircraft. This moral courage, willingness to risk careers, is absolutely vital in any combat leader, if future combat catastrophes are to be avoided.

Competence is required in managers as well as combat leaders. For the combat leader operational competence is critical. The five combat leaders studied had no trouble getting people to follow them, because they knew how to carry out the operations they were asking their followers to execute. Patton was a tactical genius, LeMay was the most innovative bomber commander in WWII, as well as being a top-notch pilot. General Brown knew every job on his B-24 crew. General Eaker was an air power pioneer, having flown every pursuit aircraft in the Army inventory leading up to WWII, and he was the architect for the 8th Air Force daylight precision bombing campaign in WWII.

A trait that the five combat leaders displayed, but one that presents a significant problem for future leaders, is that of selflessness. As stated earlier, a 1985 Army War College study learned that 68 percent of the officers surveyed agreed that the officer corps was preoccupied with personal gain. This concern for personal gain is an unacceptable trend for future military leaders, especially combat leaders. Had General Ridgway not been selfless, he might not have fought the plan to airdrop the 82nd Division near Rome, since the plan was backed by his superiors all the way to General Eisenhower. He was so convinced it would be a failure, he continued to fight the plan even though it jeopardized his command position and career. If a manager fails to exhibit selflessness, he may create problems for

the efficiency of his organization. However, if a combat leader fails to exhibit this trait, many lives could be lost, because the leader, fearing for his career, fails to question a foolish order.

Combat requires winners. Combat leaders of the future must be winners. Graceful losers are not the kind of leaders we need in any future conflict. Patton's opinion that if a leader goes into battle determined to come out a winner or a corpse, emphasizes that a combat leader must know how to win, and must have the determination to win.

Finally, integrity is one of the traits identified as a requisite for combat leaders. It is a trait strongly exhibited by the five leaders discussed. This trait is not unique to combat leaders, but is so vital to the military professional that it can not be left off any list of leadership traits. It can be said that a leader must have integrity for any of the other traits to have meaning. The five leaders studied were totally committed professionals who displayed the highest integrity. As the Eighth Air Force commander in England at the beginning of the US involvement in WWII, General Eaker received a lot of criticism from the Army Air Chief, General Arnold for the lack of success of the Eighth AF bombers. General Eaker could have yielded to the temptation to paint a rosier picture of bombing successes than was true, since most crews came back from missions with exaggerated claims for bomb

damage and enemy aircraft shot down. Instead, Eaker made every effort to stop the exaggerated claims, and always provided Arnold the best estimate of mission success, no matter how bad the news. This willingness to tell it like it is, is a lesson our future leaders must understand and adhere to, if we are to avoid the kind of controversies that occurred in Vietnam regarding body counts and mission success.

There is no doubt that managerial skills are important, but the reason for the military's existence, to defend our country by being prepared to win any future conflict with our enemies, demands that its leaders be prepared to lead in combat. Such preparation must include training to develop combat leadership skills, just as managerial skills must be developed.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The information and analytical process used in the preceding discussion leads to several generalizations about combat leadership. First, on the basis of the information researched as well as the present AWC curriculum, there appears to be some confusion over what type of leader the military needs. Most of the articles researched stress managerial traits or skills for leaders. This emphasis on management appears to be a result of the increasing technical nature of the military, especially the Air Force. It also could reflect the limited number of senior leaders in today's military that have been combat leaders.

Finally, if future leaders need to be both managers and heroic or combat leaders, how can they be developed? One of the accepted ways of developing future leaders is to have role models. General Eaker stated that the way he developed his leadership philosophy was by selecting several senior leaders during the inter-war period between WWI and WWII and studying these men as well as seeking assignments that put him in a position to work for them. Additionally, the study of leadership at the various military schools must not only stress various leadership traits but must also involve the

study of our great combat leaders of the past, men like the five combat leaders that were the focus of this report.

There must be a greater emphasis on the traits and skills of combat leadership. The military has to accept the idea that its leaders must be prepared to lead in combat. Peacetime leadership primarily involves managing, but for a peacetime leader to be an effective combat leader, regardless of level, the philosophy and traits must be nurtured before the next conflict occurs.

General Patton felt, despite changes in weaponry, that any future war would be won by individual soldiers and that they would require inspirational leaders. I believe he was entirely correct in believing that no matter how great a leader a person is, he can not be successful if he is not visible. The idea that senior leaders of future conflicts will not be out with the troops they command does not fit General Patton's idea of visibility. Senior leaders must be visible and inspire their troops be they Army, Navy, or Air Force.

On the basis of this study, I strongly believe that the military must reassess its method of teaching leadership. Past military leaders involved in combat must receive a more prominent position in curricula. There is no doubt that the military needs leaders who can be effective managers and combat leaders. In peacetime, developing managerial skills

should not be very difficult, since a young officer is in the management environment from the beginning of his or her career. The same is not true of developing combat leadership traits. The military must find a way to develop the traits of combat leadership in our young officers in the same way it develops their managerial skills.

How does the military develop traits of combat leadership in its officers? As mentioned above, there needs to be a change in how leadership is taught in the military schools. Curricula should put less emphasis on management, business administration and executive development. Development of leaders would probably be enhanced through the study of subjects such as behavioral science and military history. The study of military history is emphasized but not for the specific purpose of development of leadership traits. The study of military history should have time devoted to great combat leaders of the past. Each level of professional military education should require a professional reading program with emphasis on past combat leaders. In the Air Force, the squadron officer school has an entire block on leadership and the Project Warrior program provides a convenient method of directing the reading at leadership. The Air Command and Staff College and Air War College have no requirements for reading about past leaders. These schools need to have a mandatory professional reading program on

leadership. For Air War College students a reading program would probably be of much greater benefit than the defense analytical study currently required. Changing the educational process is the top priority, but there is another aspect to developing future leaders that should be stressed.

Psychological biographies of gifted people repeatedly demonstrate the important part a mentor plays in developing an individual.¹ General Esienhower credits the transformation of his career from competent to outstanding to the close association he had with General Fox Connor while working under him in Panama.² Senior leaders need to understand the important part they play in developing future leaders. I am sure this occurs already but it needs greater emphasis, especially at the wing commander level.

There are some things being done to put greater emphasis on leadership traits, including combat leadership, but there needs to be more and I feel the quickest way to accomplish this is with the professional reading program I suggested.

NOTES

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5. Province, The Unknown Patton, pg220-222 (includes all five of the leadership traits attributed to Patton)

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27. Ibid, pg 75-76.

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41. Lt. Gen.(ret) Ira C. Eaker "Some Observations on Leadership", Speech at The Air War College (Maxwell AFB, Al.: 17 March 1961), pg 5-13 (The entire paragraph is taken from the transcript of Eaker's speech).

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